



# WORKFORCE SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF VETERANS

OCTOBER 1, 2008

ISSUE 1

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. I say ours because the content will be a reflection of your (Workforce Services staff) comments, questions and suggestions. My hope is that we can communicate worthwhile information up, down and across. The primary function of this forum is to educate and share pertinent information. However, I will also be asking for topics of interest; best practices, new facts, interesting websites, new hires, upcoming retirements, beneficial experiences or just fun stories. The frequency is yet to be determined. I am open to suggestions. Thank you for your continued support. Brad Nelson, Veterans Program Manager 444-1630

## *Welcome to our new DVOP*

Amee Bush is our newest addition to the DVOP family. Amee will serve as a 1/2 time DVOP and 1/2 time WF Consultant.

Amee is a veteran of the U.S. Army from 1989—1992. She brings a great deal of diverse background and experience to the Bitterroot Job Service Workforce Center. She grew up in the Bitterroot and is a valuable resource to our community, as she possesses

## *Did you know???*

Veterans and service members can utilize their existing Montgomery GI Bill benefits (CH 1606, 1607 and 30) for VA approved OJT and Apprenticeship programs. Visit [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov) or contact Tom Cummins or Bruce Knutson at 444-0691 for more information.

Veteran Priority of Service rules require that we (Workforce Services) take certain steps to ensure verifiable compliance. A few examples are:

Clear signage upon entry into your WF office asking Veterans to identify themselves.

Advance notification of job vacancies when skills match.

Continuous networking with local employers and emphasis on hiring veterans first.

Ongoing contact with registered veterans to ensure information is accurate and current.

Montana is the 4th largest state (geographically); has the 2nd highest Veteran population per capita; and our DVOP/LVER staff have the largest coverage area of any other state.

VETSUCCESS.GOV is a great website for information on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (CH 31 Vets).

**NOVEMBER 11,  
2008 IS VETER-  
ANS DAY. TAKE  
TIME TO THANK A  
VETERAN FOR  
THEIR SERVICE,  
SACRIFICE AND  
CONTRIBUTION TO  
THIS GREAT COUN-  
TRY. DOWNLOAD A  
FREE VETERANS  
DAY PHOTO FOR  
YOUR OFFICE AT  
[WWW1.VA.GOV/  
OPA/VETSDAY/  
GALLERY.ASP](http://WWW1.VA.GOV/OPA/VETSDAY/GALLERY.ASP)**

an acquired understanding of its many nuances. Since returning here from her military travels, she has worked for some major employers, bringing a wealth of knowledge and understanding from the employer's perspective. Her background includes 4 years with Garlick Helicopters on a VA OJT program as a Parts and Purchasing Manager; the Ravalli County Sheriff's Department as a Detention Officer and Reserve Deputy for 1 year before returning to Garlick Helicopters as Vice President for 4 more years. Garlick Helicopters is a local employer that has been recognized several times by the American Legion as hiring 100% Veterans. After leaving Garlick, she started working for Glazo-Smith-Kline. Shortly thereafter she was offered a position with the Bitterroot Center, thrilling the Manager to have stolen back one of their recent hires. In addition, Amee brings personal experience as a graduate of Trapper Creek Job Corp.

*New DVOP Cont'd on page 2*

# Retiree Corner

## Doug Okland Bids Farewell



The Missoula Workforce Center, and the entire Workforce Services unit bids farewell to one of our own this month.

Doug served with the US Marine Corps from 1969-1995. He rose to the rank of Colonel, and received an Honorable discharge after 26 years of service to his country.

After his service, Doug was Staff Director from 1995-1996 at the US Mint in Washington D.C. He moved to Montana in 1996 and served as VP/General Manager and President of Montana Naturals, Inc. in Arlee for two years.

After that, he started with the Missoula Job Service in July of 1998 as Employment Services Specialist. He resigned in August of 1999 to join a prominent local law firm as Office Manager. After a brief stint there, he returned to the Missoula office as a 12-month temporary ESS in December 2001. He assumed duties in the newly created position of a Reemployment Specialist, and through his creativeness and dedication turned it into a model for the state. Doug became a permanent employee in December of 2002, continuing in his assigned role as outreach specialist for UI

claimants. Doug devised a database of clients and ensured that the maximum number of customers received services by making countless phone calls as well as trying other contact efforts if he needed to track someone down to offer his help. Doug had an extremely high success rate.

On March 22, 2004, Doug assumed the role of ½ time DVOP and ½ time Reemployment Specialist and, after Reemployment funding ended, converted to ½ time DVOP until his retirement in October of 2008.

Doug split one FTE position of a DVOP with his coworker Gary Swartz and never has there been a better team of Veteran Representatives than these two individuals. Doug re-established a close and effective professional relationship with VA VocRehab, enhanced our business outreach, and helped to establish close contacts with the S & K Tribes via the Warrior Society in Ronan. Doug also ensured superb communication with Valor House staff and a variety of other relevant service providers.

Doug always goes the extra mile for any and all Veterans. The following from a thank you note received in the office is just one example of what Doug's customers have to say about him:

**Doug,**

**Wow, what an inspiring visit. Thank you, sir! My first glimpse of you made me proud to have worn the uniform. You are still a picture perfect Marine Officer.**

Being an avid hunter and expert fly fisherman and having a little extra time, Doug will probably make it harder for a good portion of our trout and game population to make it through the rest of the fall unharmed.

Doug's commitment to the veterans of this country is exemplary, deeply felt, and unsurpassed, whether he is at work or as a private citizen. Doug spends many hours of his own time continuing to serve his country by caring for and assisting his fellow veterans and their families. He is irreplaceable and we feel privileged to have had the honor to work with him. Thank you so very much, Doug.

*Submitted by Wolf Ametsbichler*

*New DVOP Cont'd from page 1*

Amee is dedicated to helping Veterans and is excited about working as a half-time DVOP. She is currently in Denver at NVTI training. Welcome Amee.

## The DVET Corner

*Submitted by Byron Erickson, Director, Veteran Employment and Training (DVET) representative for Montana*

### What does a DVET do?

A DVET is responsible for administering Department of Labor/VETS grant monies and monitoring grant goal outcomes. As it relates to the Montana Workforce Services, this means monitoring the grant money, veteran priority of service practices, veteran preference policies, provides technical assistance, reviews Negotiated Performance Standards, and performs Validation Reviews of Workforce Center accomplishments.

DVET duties also promote, review, and recommend grant monies for Veteran Homeless Stand Downs, Homeless Veteran Reintegration, and Veteran Work Incentive Programs (VWIP). The grants amount to 7K for a one day, and 10K for a two day Stand Down. The VWIP grant is for up to \$700,000.00. The DVET will review and monitor applications and performance outcomes of the grants.

The DVET promotes administrative coordination between the various military units, Workforce Services, and provides mobilization and de-mobilization briefings, etc.

The DVET is the source for veterans who cannot solve USERRA problems through Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The DVET is trained in USERRA law and goes through certification to investigate and resolve USERRA complaints. Also, the DVET investigates veteran preference complaints related to federal job applications, or discrimination against a veteran not hired due to military service. I should be certified as an Investigator by November 2008.

### What does the DVET look for when visiting an office?

Visiting an office is a joy for the DVET. He gets to visit old friends and acquaintances, learn more about the office, the area economy, and provide technical assistance. The purpose is to listen, share ideas, and improve opportunities for veterans.

One thing common to look for is **veteran signage**. A veteran walking into an office should be able to see a notice for them to identify themselves as a veteran and perhaps a list of services available. If I have to ask where the sign is then it is not obvious enough to be effective. It may not be obvious if it is too busy, faded, poorly composed, or in a place that is not readily seen.

Is it easy for a veteran to see a DVOP, LVER, or an Employment Specialist? A DVOP is to be available to disabled veterans, recently separated, and veterans most in need. Some veterans may ask for the "vet rep" and should be allowed access. The DVOP can assess the veteran for needed services. It should be fairly easy for the front desk or an Employment Specialist to assess a veteran from the information on their file or a face-to-face conversation to see if they need more intensive services. The bottom line is to insure that the DVOP or LVER is accessible by the veteran who needs assistance.

How is the veteran given priority of service, particularly at the front desk? How hard is it for the veteran to receive added value services? What options are offered to a veteran when they ask for DVOP or LVER assistance? Are they told they must make an appointment, wait until the vet rep is available, or offered Employment Specialist assistance when a vet rep is not available?

### What is a Validation Review, and what does the DVET look for?

It is an in-depth review of **veteran priority of service** practices in any given office. It may include a review of job order practices in the MWORKS system, assessment practices of veteran needs, DART report statistics, and priority of service practices in all DOL funded programs.

The purpose of Validation Reviews is to provide technical assistance that just enhances our ability to be aware of good practices and be better at achieving grant goals.

### How can we get more DVOP staffing?

Because of a formula adopted by the U.S. Department of Labor the service delivery area is not considered in allocation of positions. Since we have a small population by numbers and a lower than average unemployment rate we are allo-

cated less money. Also, congress has flat funded this program for a number of years. Higher costs of doing business mean we get less in FTE allocation.

Workforce Services can try for modifications to the current plan. The down side is that the money is short-term and then people get laid off when the money runs out.

Workforce Services can apply for a Special Initiative Project. It is best to not ask for too much money as the money that feeds this program is unspent monies in other states. It can be renewed from year to year. Last year's proposal was a good one. Though not approved, Workforce Services is considering submitting it again next spring.

Workforce Services is considering another grant application for the VWIP. It will be designed to provide Regional Veteran Outreach assistance for each region.

There is some movement by Senator Tester to have legislative directives address the DVOP shortages throughout Montana and especially on the reservations. Any veteran educational information that may be requested by our congressional offices may help them form a picture of the training and education needs of veterans across Montana.

The DVET and the Regional Administrator (RAVET) do not have the power to allot more positions in the State of Montana. While they can make recommendations and approve requests on modifications, and Special Initiatives, they have no power to assign more positions than the formula allots. The allotments are done according to the formula by VETS in Washington, D.C.

The only major changes in allotment would be caused by congressional legislative mandates or the State of Montana spends state money on the program.

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Check out this website:

[Helmetstohardhats.org](http://Helmetstohardhats.org)

Good stuff!!!